

THE LIGHT OF ASIA

By A STUDENT OF BUDDHISM

The readjustment of all values which is taking place before our eyes, and the vast break-up through which humanity is at present passing, have created in many millions of people all over the world the desire for a religious anchor in the stream of phenomena, for a moral and eternal standard of values which is not subject to the daily changes of politics and the "situation." Many to whom hitherto religion was something for the uneducated masses and old-fashioned people, but not for them, are today looking at the world's religions and asking: What can they give me?

Religions are of significance not only to the individual but also to the community. Without a moral basis a satisfactory human community life is unthinkable, for law and force alone are, in the long run, no guarantee for order. During long eras of human history, faith and superstition in a variety of forms have been the moral basis of the community. Who can maintain that this is still the case today?

We do not know whether, among the many changes taking place around us, there will also be a religious one; still less do we know what form such a change would take. But the study of religious questions is among the tasks of a magazine whose aim is to deal with the most vital problems of the twentieth century. We begin in this number for three reasons with a contribution on Buddhism. First, because it is surprising how little we, living in the midst of a Buddhist world, generally know about Buddhism. Secondly, because Buddhism is a faith common to the peoples of the Orient, from Burma to Japan; this renders it particularly important today. And lastly, because Buddhism, in spite of its venerable age, is especially topical in yet another connection today. It is a characteristic of all people influenced by the technical and psychological development of the West that they find it very hard if not impossible to believe something which they have not understood with their reason. Hence they will find a study of Buddhism, an atheistic faith based purely on the human instead of the divine, interesting. Buddhism offers a moral basis of life without taking for granted a divine revelation at a given time, at a given place, to a given person or people.

We believe we are justified in saying that the following article is unique in magazine literature in its clear and concise presentation of one of the most difficult spiritual problems. It was written by a man who, in order to study the religions and cultures of the Asiatic nations, traveled through Ceylon, India, and Afghanistan and has been living in the East for several years where he has been engaged mainly in the study of Buddhism.—K. M.

STATUES OF BUDDHA

When they come to Peking or other Eastern cities, many Europeans and Americans buy statues of Buddha. If one is lucky, one finds genuine old bronzes and wood carvings from which emanate the charm of fine workmanship, the magic force of centuries of veneration, and a great serenity. It is a serenity which comes from the introspection and inner peace lacking in most moderns. The great images

of the Buddha in temples and groves also radiate that force of serenely smiling wisdom which is directed inward and brings the beholder under its spell.

While Christ is usually represented in the tortured position on the Cross, the Buddha is nearly always seen in the harmonious position of meditation, the most important Buddhist spiritual exercise. Meditation is designed to calm the spirit, to release it from hatred,

anger, and desire, and to lead it to what is truly essential. For the highest truth is not a theory to be read in books or learnt from teachers. It is to be found in man himself, and he becomes conscious of it as soon as he awakens from the ignorance of his entanglement with the material world of things and the treacherous world of appearances and pleasures and endeavors to lead a life void of delusions.

Reading or study alone will never enable us to accomplish the goal of Buddhism, which is the conquest of life and death. The art of swimming cannot be acquired from books; they may give us certain useful information on how to swim, but if we never practise swimming we shall never become swimmers. In the same way, but in a far deeper sense, we shall never understand the teaching of the Buddha, not to say accomplish its aim, if we do not apply the teaching in our daily life.

THE LONG CHAIN OF BUDDHAS

Buddhism is the name given to that religion which venerates "Buddhas" as the revealers of the redeeming truth. The designation "Buddha" was known to the Indians as early as during the period of the Vedic religion (1500—600 B.C.). It means "the Awakened One" and indicates a person who after great struggles has gained perfect knowledge regarding the essence of all that is, a saint who has for ever freed himself from passion and suffering, and who has grown beyond all earthly things to set forth the truths found by him to humanity caught in delusions.

According to Buddhist views, countless Buddhas have preceded the historical Buddha in former periods of the world. And there will also be future Buddhas who will continue to proclaim the "good law" which shows the way out of the wretchedness of *Samsara*, the wandering (the eternal wheel of birth and death) to which all beings are chained until they find deliverance, to eternal bliss, to *Nirvana*.

The Buddha of our period, Siddhartha Gautama, who lived from 563 to 483 B.C., the last of this chain of saints, was an ascetic from the noble clan of the Shakyas. Hence he is called Shakyamuni, the sage of the Shakya clan. This Shakyamuni or Gautama is to most Buddhists simply "the Buddha." He is considered by them to be the founder of their religion, because the wisdom revealed by his predecessors had fallen into oblivion so that the "path to deathlessness" had to be discovered anew. For critical science he is the only historical Buddha, compared with whom all other Buddhas are submerged in the twilight of legend.

PRINCE AND SAINT

We shall not trouble the reader with a description of Gautama's life before his Enlightenment. It can be found in any encyclopedia. Moreover almost everyone knows the legend of how the young Prince Siddhartha Gautama, growing up in carefree luxury and married to the beautiful Yasodhara, one day, when out riding, met with a beggar, a sick man, a corpse, and an ascete, and how, deeply affected by this experience, he decided to give up all the pleasures of his princely life, his rank, and his family, and to set out to solve the riddle of life. This riddle, for him as for many thinking persons, consisted of the question, why suffering is inseparably bound up with life.

Concentrating his attention on the eternal problems of life and death, the Prince grasped the fundamental law of *Transitoriness* to which all forms are subject. At first he turned to priests and philosophers to solve the riddle of life. They advised him to offer sacrifices to the gods in temples and at the house altar in the traditional manner, to carry out pedantically the prescribed washings and ceremonies, and to chant magic words and formulas on the correct occasions and in the correct order. This would placate the gods and induce them to alleviate the sufferings of man. Doubtless temples, priests, and rituals are of value

in continually reminding the materialistically inclined people of higher realms. However, such paraphernalia cannot tear out evil at its root. For this, something much more essential must happen in man himself, something that goes far beyond prayers, sacrifices, and rituals. Gautama realized this.

AN ATHEISTIC FAITH

For six years Gautama wandered through India's burning plains, undergoing hardships and castigations. Finally he had to admit that, in spite of his extreme asceticism and his absorption of all the knowledge then existing in India, he had not reached the ultimate solution to the riddle of life. It was not until he sank into deep meditation under a tree near Gaya that Enlightenment came to him. Here, assisted by the experiences of his previous efforts, his ascetic life, and the knowledge acquired from his teachers, he made the final plunge into the depths of life's mysteries, which he now understood and solved. Having accomplished this he henceforth spoke of himself as an Awakened Being, a Buddha, awakened from the illusions of life to the highest Reality.

Illusion, *Maya*, in Buddhist teaching, does not mean that the things to which the term is applied do not exist, but simply that they are not what they seem. To give an illustration from everyday life: when we see an electric fan in motion, we know that there are four broad, heavy metal blades revolving at high speed, although we cannot see them. To the "un-awakened" mind of the child, what we know to be solid blades is either nothing at all or at most a transparent disk. The Buddha continually admonished his disciples not to look upon things and objects of sensation or thought as they *appear* to be, but "according to reality." By this he desired to wean them away from delusive thinking and to lead them, step by step, to Awakening, to Reality.

"Enlightenment," according to the Buddhist conception, does not mean

divine inspiration but the fruit of our own meditation. Buddhism, therefore, is an atheistic doctrine and knows no god in the sense of the Bible or the Koran. All knowledge and all illusion originate in man. Man creates his own destiny. Hence there is in Buddhism neither a belief in God, Providence, and Grace nor are there any prayers.

The Doctrine which Gautama now taught for fifty years as Buddha grew on Indian soil from the Vedanta philosophy. From it he took over the conceptions of *Samsara*, *Karma* (more will be said about these), and *Maya*, as well as certain *Yoga* methods. The practice of *Yoga* leads on the one hand to the control of all physical functions, on the other to the concentration of mind and will-power, as well as to the development of psychic powers unknown to the rational, technically-minded West or contemptuously disposed of as "occultism" by "enlightened" science. (More about the Hindu teaching can be found in Deussen's "60 Upanishads" and "General History of Philosophy.")

IS BUDDHISM PESSIMISTIC?

Buddhism is erroneously known in the Occident as the "philosophy of pessimism." It is characteristic of our age that the Buddha should be called a pessimist, he who set out to free mankind from all suffering—physical, mental, moral, or spiritual—and he who, according to the Buddhists, alone of all beings accomplished this end.

The Buddha, by virtue of his penetrating insight and wisdom, recognized that, since all is transitory, all, in the end, can only bring us suffering. He did not, however, subscribe to the idea that it is only life here and now which brings us suffering and that there is a heaven where existence is eternal bliss. All existence, according to him, because only possible in ever changing and ever decomposing matter, is of necessity impermanent and, therefore, suffering.

Even if existence were restricted to one life only, its suffering, owing to the

transitoriness of that life, would be very real. But we have lived since beginninglessness and shall continue to live in infinity, unless we learn how to step out of the vicious circle of life. And since existence, according to the Buddhist teaching, is by no means restricted to the human realm but can effectuate itself in five spheres—those of hell, animals, shadows, humans, gods—we must ask: Is there a condition which is free of suffering?

This is precisely the problem the Buddha set himself to solve: He discovered a way of stepping out of all life and reaching Nirvana. Here is a short summary of his teaching.

REINCARNATION

AND MAN'S CRAVING TO LIVE

Life is not the gift of a creator but simply the result of ignorance concerning its real nature. To all creatures, life seems the highest possible good. For no matter how much or how often we suffer, no matter how little happiness we may know, we still want to live. Why? Look at a stray dog on the street: it has no master, no home, no shelter, scarcely any food, yet it too wants to live and will fight to the last to preserve this life. Why?

Because of our Ignorance we crave life; and because of our Ignorance we cannot cope with it. Or can we?

Our Ignorance has the further detrimental result that we continually infringe upon the moral foundation of life. Being ignorant of life's why and wherefore, our chief purpose is to maintain and assert ourselves, even if we have to do wrong. Our desire to live is so strong that when we die, that is, when our present body has been consumed by fruitless efforts and passions, we shall be born again according to our Karma. Our Karma or our affinities are the quintessence of our habits of thought and deed. Just as lightning is not, as was formerly thought, the message of an angry god but the accumulated discharge of electric energy, so is our life process the

discharge of our thirst for sentient existence. Just as lightning strikes where it is attracted, so will we, having lost our body in death, blindly strike a womb to which we are attracted. Since in death we lose our sensory and perceptive apparatus and can no longer think or chose, we will blindly follow our urge to live.

In this life it is our inclinations which lead and drive us. Some people go to horse races, others not; some frequent opium dens, others never go there; some are to be found in libraries or bent over their books, others never read or study. The determining factor in every case is attraction. Having throughout our lives followed certain inclinations, death cannot simply extinguish them. On the contrary: a narcotic addict, as long as he knows that he can get his drug wherever he wants it, is satisfied; but deprive him of his daily dose and you will see a raving maniac. So it is with us. As long as we can satisfy our inclinations in life, be they vulgar or noble, we are satisfied. But when in death we lose our bodies and are thus deprived of this satisfaction, we become an elemental force. We will strike at a seed that attracts us, in any sphere of existence, be it among the gods or among the animals. And we shall be quite satisfied to live the life of a dog, if only we can live. This is the thirst for life begotten by Ignorance. Thus we wander endlessly in Samsara, in the circle of rebirths, continually ascending and descending and never finding satisfaction—unless we understand and accept the message of the Buddha.

This doctrine of reincarnation may sound strange, but need it be less true for all that? As Voltaire said: "It is no more surprising to be born twice than once," and we may add, many times.

MAN AND HIS KARMA

It is we ourselves who are responsible for the life into which we are born, there to reap what we have

sown. This is the doctrine of Karma. Karma simply means the relation of cause and effect in the moral sphere. Be we farmer, manufacturer, navigator, or architect, we always plan and work according to the law of cause and effect. We think and speak according to this law. How can we suppose that our deeds remain without consequences? To be sure, not all our deeds show their results at the same time. Some of our actions produce results immediately, some later, some not at all, at least in this life. But it is not possible for some actions to produce no result whatever. It may only appear to be so in this life. But as, after this life, we will live again and again, the result of every action is bound to descend upon us sooner or later.

Hence according to Hindu and Buddhist ideas there are no "innocent children," and no child starts life with a clean slate. Its fate, for instance if it is crippled or suffers an early death through illness or accident, is determined by the Karma of its former existence. Thus it can happen that some people have success while others with more ability and diligence have none. Some are born rich, some poor, some clever, some stupid, and so on.

LIBERATION

To escape from this endless circle of life and death is the purpose of the Buddha's teaching. How can it be accomplished? Let the words of the Buddha himself speak. They are taken from his Second Discourse in the *Digha Nikaya* where he explains what a man will do under the influence of the Doctrine:

"After a while he abandons a small property, or a great property, leaves behind a small circle of parents and friends, or a large circle, he leaves home to lead the homeless life. Become an ascete, he disciplines himself in the pure discipline and remains blameless in his conduct. Guarding himself against the least deflection, he struggles, step by step, perseveringly;

with holy endeavor in deeds and in words, he lives pure, perfect in the virtues, guards the doors of the senses, is equipped with clear consciousness, and is content. . . . Without cudgel, swordless, he is benevolent, full of tenderness and cherishes kindness and compassion to all living beings. . . . Since covetousness and discontent, evil and pernicious thoughts quickly overpower those who leave unguarded their seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking, he is assiduous in this surveillance, he guards his sight and mind. . . . He seeks out an isolated and peaceful resting place: a grove, the foot of a tree, a grotto in the rocks, a cave in the mountains, a cemetery, the depth of a forest, a litter of straw in the open plain. . . . He sits down crosslegged, and practices mindfulness [meditation, as it is commonly called in the West]. Worldly desires he has rejected. . . . Deeply calmed in mind, he purifies his mind of proud discontent. . . . Recognizing thus the Five Hindrances as overcome in himself, he is animated with joy. Animated with joy, he becomes serene. Being serene, his body becomes stilled. The body being stilled, he experiences happiness. Being happy, he attains unity of mind and concentration. Thus, far removed from desires, from all evil things, a monk, in blissful serenity, born of peaceful calm and thoughtful contemplation, attains . . . With a profound, purified, clear, lucid mind, free from impurities, flexible, alert, immovable and intact, he bends down and directs his mental activities to the domain of clear knowledge, to producing a body made of mind-matter, to generating power, to developing a supernormal hearing, to penetrating the minds of others, to remembering and recalling former existences, to the knowledge of the disappearance and reappearance of beings (death here and rebirth here or elsewhere), to the comprehension and knowledge of all illusion. . . . Through such enlightenment, through such insight, his mind frees itself from the delusion of desire, from the delusion of life, from the

delusion of ignorance 'In the freed one, there is liberation' — this knowledge arises in him. At an end is rebirth, fulfilled the holy life, accomplished the task, this world is no more, he now comprehends."

MEDITATION

It is not easy to explain the meaning of "meditation." Our personality is in reality an apparatus composed of six senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. But as soon as we think, we think according to illusions. For our organ of thought is dependent on our senses for all data. Our senses, however, communicate not reality to us but only appearances. In order to reach the realm of pure and real knowledge, of highest knowledge, we must learn to acquire complete mastery, first over our bodies, then over our minds. This is the chief purpose of certain exercises commonly known as meditation. They begin, after a long period of preparatory training, with certain breathing exercises, of which there are sixteen, and which lead to a complete suspension of all vegetative and somatic functions of the body. Those who reach this point claim that they can leave the body at will and enter various realms, as, for instance, the realm of unlimited consciousness. Higher and higher they go till they reach the dissolution of all perceptibility, a point at which they achieve absolute knowledge. They are cured of all desire for desires or sentient existence, of all ignorance.

NIRVANA

The meaning of Nirvana, the goal of the Buddhist, has been very much misunderstood in the Occident. In order to grasp it, we must first understand something else.

The Buddha called his teaching the *Anatta Vada*, the Not-Self-Doctrine. Everything we sense, perceive, or think, as well as our sensory and perceptive apparatus, is impermanent by the very nature of things. Hence to with-

draw from every form of existence does not mean self-annihilation. Those who liberate themselves from all life in every conceivable form have only destroyed suffering and not themselves. But they no longer *exist*. To exist means to suffer, for existence is only possible in matter. All existence ceases in Nirvana, and for this reason we cannot suffer there.

Nevertheless life can be recognized here and now as *anatta*, as painful, as "not-myself," without in any way denying one's ego. One only denies something that has never been the real self. Then one becomes free. For this very reason the Buddha always speaks of liberation and never of annihilation.

THE TEN RULES FOR THE DISCIPLES

When he was eighty years old the Buddha died, still on his wanderings, after having said farewell to his disciples. Meanwhile his Doctrine had spread throughout India. Communities of monks had sprung up everywhere. They lived according to the following ten rules which are observed by Buddhist monks to this day:

(1) To endeavor not to harm any living creature, that is, above all not to kill or cause pain to any creature. (This is the basis for the vegetarianism of all serious Buddhists and their characteristic love of animals.)

(2) Not to take what has not been given to one.

(3) To avoid unchastity.

(4) To neither lie nor calumniate.

(5) To refrain from all intoxicants. (This also includes mental intoxicants, such as erotic or exciting art: according to Buddhist doctrine, even the fine arts are a medium of delusion, as they serve only temporarily to hide reality from man and cannot offer him genuine release from suffering.)

(6) Not to eat at unsuitable times. (Monks are not allowed to take any food after the midday meal.)

(7) Not to be present at dances, theatricals, and musical performances, etc. (According to Buddhist teaching, therefore, even so-called sacred music, such as chorales or fugues by Bach, should be rejected as a medium of delusion.)

(8) Not to adorn oneself with flowers or cosmetic ointments.

(9) Not to use soft and luxurious beds.

(10) Not to accept gold and silver. (The first five regulations, the five *Silas*, also apply to laymen.)

A monk may possess eight objects only: three articles of clothing, a begging bowl, a belt, a razor, needle and thread, and a water filter.

In the flood of enthusiasm which the new doctrine caused, a wave of active ethical feeling seized especially the religiously minded youth of the country. Tired of the thousands of gods and the empty formulas of the Hindu priests and, like all youth, thrilled by something new, it took up the Doctrine of the Buddha with ardor. The climax of Indian Buddhism was reached in the reign of the Emperor Asoka (269-237 B.C.) who was led in his private life and in his policy by Buddhist principles and who ended his life as a monk.

The most important and for India the most revolutionary fact was that the Buddhists did not recognize any castes. The Buddha had taught that it is not the privileges of caste but one's own character and one's own actions that determine the value or non-value, the high or low position of each individual. Of course the Brahmanic priests, who saw themselves threatened in their power, did everything to destroy Buddhism. Aided by the later degeneration of Buddhism in India and by the expansion of Islam and its culture, the Brahmins finally, in the course of centuries, succeeded in achieving their goal, so that Buddhism is almost extinct in India today.

SCRIPTURES AND THE STUDY OF BUDDHISM

During the life of the Buddha nothing of what he taught and said was written down but, according to Indian custom, it was all committed to memory. Even today there are Buddhist monks in Ceylon and Burma who know by heart all the discourses of the Buddha in the Pali language, in which they have been preserved on palm leaves for more than two thousand years. Four years after the Buddha's death his disciples assembled and, in order to prevent false teaching from creeping in, put his discourses into writing. Two further councils of monks, in 369 and 246 B.C., definitely fixed the texts of the discourses and the rules of the monastic order. Later still, metaphysical dissertations and commentaries were added. Thus we have the "Three Baskets" (*Tripitaka*) of the Buddhist canon of scriptures. There was no Pali writing system, so that all Buddhist discourses and texts were written in the Sanskrit alphabet although in the Pali language. Valuable works of Buddhism are the "Collection of Middle Discourses," the "Dhammapadam" (a collection of sayings), and the "Hymns of the Monks and Nuns."

As early as two centuries after the Buddha's death, Buddhism began to split up into many schools and sects. In the course of the centuries, that which the Buddha had wanted to prevent more than anything else, took place: the path of liberation became a subject for argumentation, a source of dogmatic hair-splitting, wrong interpretation, and a labyrinth of truth and legend, superstition and ritual. It is owing to this degeneration that Buddhism is rejected by many people in Asia or smiled at condescendingly as "antiquated," a fate also suffered by other religions in the world. In doing this, people go too far, for they extend to eternal, universal truths and their revealers a rejection which should only apply to the dogmatic and superstitious distortions of these truths.

Among the modern Occidental nations Germany has shown the greatest comprehension and appreciation of the teachings of the Buddha. The philosopher Schopenhauer was one of the first to direct attention to them although he knew them only imperfectly, very few texts having been studied or translated in his time. The great German savant and orientalist Max Mueller was the pioneer. He was followed by a whole array of brilliant scholars all over Europe, but principally in Germany. Special mention must be made of Dr. Georg Grimm, of Munich, whose classical work "The Doctrine of the Buddha" and other books are unrivaled. Dr. K. E. Neumann devoted his whole life to the translation, from Pali into German, of the most important Buddhist scriptures. Excellent works were written by Oldenberg and H. von Glasenapp. There are other good translations, notably those of a scholar known under his Buddhist name Nyanatiloka, a German who has been living in Ceylon for a great number of years and who is now interned there. Incidentally the adoption by national-socialist Germany of a symbol sacred to Buddhism, the swastika, did not fail to make a strong impression on many Buddhists throughout Asia.

THE TWO VESSELS

The various sects of Buddhism can be grouped into two main divisions: the *Hinayana* (literally: the small vessel), prevalent in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, India; and the *Mahayana* (the great vessel), found in Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, and Mongolia.

The great division split on the Not-Self, the *Anatta* doctrine of the Buddha. This is not surprising, for in the whole realm of thought there is hardly a tenet more difficult to understand. Even during the lifetime of the Buddha some of his disciples could not rightly understand it; but the Buddha was there to help them. After his passing and that of his close disciples, there were some who completely denied an ego (the annihilationists), while others

postulated a personal ego (the eternalists). The first are to be found among the followers of *Hinayana*, the second among those of *Mahayana*. This is the essential difference between the two schools of Buddhism. But it should be pointed out that all Buddhist sects accept the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Twelve *Nidanas*, which cannot be discussed in this brief article.

The ideal figure of *Mahayana* Buddhism is the *Boddhisatva*, who renounces his own liberation to Nirvana in order to help all deluded creatures toward knowledge and freedom. The saint of the *Hinayana* school, the *Arhat* (Chinese: *Lohan*) is mainly interested in his own liberation. *Hinayana* Buddhists claim that they represent the pure Doctrine, while the supporters of the *Mahayana* school maintain that they have developed the teaching and kept it from stagnation.

THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

In 246 B.C. Emperor Asoka sent his son Mahinda to Ceylon. This was the beginning of Buddhist mission activity. During the course of the next few centuries Buddhism was introduced into Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Indo-China, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, and Japan. As was also the case with Christianity, it was influenced and altered in every country according to the nature of its people and the existing religious traditions bound up with landscape, climate, and history.

The spread of Buddhism took place everywhere without force or bloodshed. No sacred trees were cut down and no images or other sacred symbols burnt. To this day tolerance is a principal characteristic of the Buddhist spirit. At present the original *Hinayana* Buddhism continues to exist only in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Ceylon, and Chittagong (India), while the *Mahayana* doctrine and methods prevail in all other Buddhist countries.

Shorn, yellow-robed mendicant monks spread the teaching of the "Four Noble

Truths," and helped the people as teachers, healers, and counsellors in all family and business affairs. The temples, which did not at all correspond to the ideas and teachings of the Buddha, did not serve only, like Christian churches, for prayer and ritual, but were at the same time schools, shelters, and hospitals. They were the meeting-places for the people to discuss marriage, family, harvest, cattle-raising, trade, and the affairs of daily life. In this way monks and temples were in close contact with the life of the people. On the other hand, there are Buddhist buildings with only symbolic meaning, in other words they are not used as temples in the usual sense. Such is the temple of Boro-Budur in Java.

CHINA

As it is impossible in the limited space of an article to show the present position of Buddhism in its numerous manifestations in all Buddhist countries, we must be content to deal with the country in which Buddhism has the greatest number of supporters, that is, China. There is all the less reason to discuss Japan as Japanese Buddhism has been excellently interpreted in the works, also published in English, of the great Japanese Zen priest and scholar, Dr. Daisetz Suzuki. His best-known book is *Zen Buddhism And Its Influence Upon Japanese Culture*.

China became acquainted with Buddhism during the Han dynasty, in the first century A.D. In the course of time Chinese Buddhism was influenced and greatly altered by the moral teachings of Confucius, by Taoism, and by the strongly marked individuality of the Chinese. It gradually split up into ten different schools. The most important Buddhist teacher was the Indian monk Bodhidharma who appeared in China in 520 A.D. and founded the Ts'an (Japanese: Zen) school.

PURE LAND SCHOOL

The greatest number of supporters among the Chinese was won by the

Pure Land school. The focal point of this school is Buddha Amithaba (Chinese: *Omitofo*, Japanese: *Amida*), unknown to Hinayana Buddhism. He is supposed to be the lord of the "Western Paradise," and his name is called upon and constantly repeated, usually with the aid of a rosary. The supporters of this school live a Puritan life and hope to be reborn in the "Western Paradise." The Pure Land school has about fifty thousand large temples in China.

To the Chinese, with his positive attitude toward life and the world, the Buddhist idea of extinction, of non-existence is incomprehensible and repulsive, especially as it opposes his deep-rooted ancestor-worship. So there arose the Pure Land school with its comforting idea of being born again somewhere in heavenly spheres.

The burial rituals, too, with their burning of paper symbols such as money, houses, and figures, etc., with their noisy, rhythmic music and the recitation of *Sutras* and magic formulas, reveal the belief in a continued existence of the spirit in other worlds. Masses for the dead form the main source of income for monasteries and temples. There are ceremonies lasting days and even weeks which cost thousands of dollars.

KWAN-YIN AND MILEIFO

Next to Amithaba, Kwan-yin plays an important part in Chinese Buddhism. Kwan-yin was originally an Indo-Tibetan male god. The Chinese took him over as a saint and made him into a woman who has become a goddess of mercy and occupies in China a position similar to that of the Virgin Mary in the West. One sees especially women kneeling before Kwan-yin images and shaking a container filled with bamboo sticks. When one of these numbered sticks jumps out of the container, it is exchanged for a piece of yellow paper inscribed with an oracle, which may say, for instance: "Do not worry about the future. You will always have food and a bed." In this way even superstition may have

an encouraging effect on the simple people. Buddhism tries to take into account the dissimilarity of people and the diversity of life. This explains its tolerance toward other religions and its ability to assume the style best suited to every people and its traditions. A truly pious person of any religion is closer to Buddhism than an irreligious person, even if he should be a Buddhist scholar.

Then there is the fat, benignly smiling Buddha Mileifo, also called Mi La. Milei-fo, originally a god of good luck, is compared to Maitreya, the coming Buddha of the next period of the world. Among the Chinese masses he is very popular, as he is supposed to be the patron of material wealth who will later "save" suffering humanity through distributing to all the good things of this world. According to the teaching of Gautama one can hardly imagine anything less Buddhist than this fat and materialistic Mileifo. However, serious Chinese Buddhists maintain that for the spiritually unawakened masses the veneration even of this un-Buddhist Buddha with quite materialistic expectations means an aid to the approach of the path of Shakyamuni. It is true that any veneration of any god or saint, offered in a reverent form for the achievement of a good, even if materialistic, purpose may unconsciously develop in man a noble seed.

MONKS AND NUNS TODAY

Visiting a monastery today one does not gain a very favorable impression of the Chinese monks. Owing to the spread of Western science and engineering the monks have lost their former importance as teachers, healers, and counsellors. Their activities are now limited to rituals and to the monastery routine within the temple.

The monastery routine in China is inflexible and strict. The monks rise at 3 a.m., dress rapidly, and "meditate" for three quarters of an hour, summer or winter, in unheated rooms. Then they go to the temple, where for an

hour and a half they read Sutras to the accompaniment of percussion instruments. Then another half hour of meditation follows before they receive their breakfast of a bowl of rice and water. Now the ceremonies ordered by laymen are carried out, usually masses for the dead, with the bereaved family present, who also have their meals in the monastery. After the ceremonies there is a rest period of fifteen minutes before the midday meal is taken. Then another rest period lasting one and a half hours, and then Sutras are read again. At 6 p.m. the day's duties end, and at 9 o'clock the monks go to bed, unless there is a special mass for a deceased lasting till midnight.

BUDDHISM AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Although much that is superficial as well as many superstitions are placed in the foreground in Chinese Buddhism, the teaching has nevertheless not lost its vital force. It is true that Buddhism has never sought directly to influence political, economic, or cultural life. As it regards life as a whole with all its phenomena and happenings as a "delusion," it has no call to reform or improve the world. Still, Buddhist organizations take part everywhere in the care of the poor and of refugees, of the victims of famines and floods. In many of the temples one can to this day find schools, hospitals, and orphanages which give their services free.

The strongest spiritual influence, however, is exerted by individual teachers who travel throughout the country, live in temples, and establish groups of disciples in every town. In remote temples in Shanghai, for instance, hundreds of men and women from all classes and professions can sometimes be found being trained as pupils of one of these teachers. They learn Buddhist wisdom and meditation. Among them can also be seen English-speaking university students in European clothes.

THE FUTURE

This overwhelmingly technically-minded age, which even the Eastern peoples could not avoid, with its invasion of European thought and science and its great political changes, has brought the youth of Asia also under its spell. These young people, too, are more interested in politics, airplanes, and sport than in temple rites and religious problems. As a reaction to this modernization, however, and to the dependence on Europe and America which it entails, a new spiritual movement has been noticeable. It has been realized that Western civilization, admired for so long and imitated in many spheres both good and bad, has only a conditional value. The Orientals have begun to see that, though in many ways it brings progress and improvements, facilitates communications, and aids trade and the health of the nation, it entails at the same time a desolation and deadening of all spiritual life. This realization has caused many Chinese and Japanese to turn back to Asia's own treasures of the spirit, with the result that they also come into contact with Buddhism again.

Hence it is quite possible that a rejuvenated Buddhism is in the making which will move its center of activity from the monastic orders and temples to ethical and social behavior in daily life. In this way a renaissance of Buddhism may be brought about, which will be more in harmony with the personality, intentions, and teachings of the Buddha than the mechanical routine of mediocre monks or temple rites and the chanting of Sutras.

Buddhism has no direct influence on the present. Neither in speeches nor

in writings, for instance, does it directly attack war. However, in all Buddhist countries and even in those countries where there are only scattered Buddhist communities, it is producing qualified personalities whose clear minds give knowledge and spiritual support to mankind, which has been overwhelmed by the storm of events, by disappointments and suffering. In this way it represents a living power in these times.

"In spite of the many changes which its outer forms have undergone, Buddhism has not altered inwardly in the course of the centuries. It is true that it included and thus more or less legitimized manifold doctrines and rites which formerly lay outside of its orbit but which nevertheless enjoyed great appreciation on the part of the large majority of its lay supporters. But there have been no changes in its basic principles. Today, just as 2500 years ago, in spite of all concessions to the instincts of the masses, it has remained a teaching of salvation, accessible only to a minority of highly developed minds." (H. von Glasenapp, *Der Buddhismus*.)

Though Buddhism was not spared the tragedy of all religions of degenerating from the revelation of highest knowledge by a perfect being into a dogmatic system, a disputed philosophy, a conventional cult, it nevertheless possesses the eternal power contained in every universal truth.

The teaching of the Buddha belongs to the indestructible spiritual treasures, to the eternal stars in the sky of wisdom, stars that shine all the brighter, the darker the night of suffering weighs upon mankind.